No. 42. On the Day of Judgment.

He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness. Acts 17. 31.

St. Paul in his travels coming to Athens, a city at that time most distinguished for all kinds of human learning, "but wholly given to Idolatry," was accused, because he preached Jesus and the Resurrection, "of being a setter forth of strange gods"—a crime held capital in that state. The Apostle, answering for himself, tells them, that as he had observed upon one of their altars "an inscription to the "unknown God," his intent was to declare unto them that God whom they knew not—the God that made the world and all things therein, in whom we live, move, and have our being, "who, altho' He had "hitherto winked at the times of their ignorance; "when, in their blind devotion they worshipped gods "of gold, silver, and stone, graven by art and man's "device, yet now commandeth all men every where to "repent"—assigning this as a powerful reason to

move them to repentance——because God hath appointed a day, &c.

If any thing be certain in the world, that must of necessity be so which God has constituted and appointed. If the laws of the Medes and Persians, being once ratified by their king, were to stand firm and never to be changed——how much more firm and sure must that be, which is enacted and established by the great King of heaven and earth? The Apostle says that it is appointed——fixed and determined—— "for all men once to die; and after this the judg= "ment." It is as certainly appointed that judg= ment shall follow after death, as that death is to follow at the end of this mortal life.

Should any one question what need of such a general judgment, since every man, upon the parting of his soul from his body, undergoes his particular judgment, and is sent to everlasting joys, or endless torments? It may be answered,

(1) Whereas man consists both of soul and body;

the soul is judged at the day of death; and the body with the soul at the day of judgment. For as they have sinned or served God together; so shall they be either miserable or reign together. Yet because the soul may and often does sin against or serve God distinctly from the body, it may and shall, during the state of separation, be either punished or rewarded, tho' the body lie senseless and corrupt in the grave.

(2) God will have His justice to be manifest openly. What He does to men at their death is hidden from the eyes of the world; but it shall be revealed and ratified at the last day in the general assembly of men and angels, that all may glorify God for his just and wise proceedings.

(3) Men after they are dead may be instruments to others that succeed them, either of vice or virtue, either of Sin or of Religion. The Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Fathers and Martyrs of the Church are long since dead; and yet still they do good in the Church of God by their pious examples

and holy writings. Thus the Apostle says of Abel, that "being dead, he yet speaketh." On the other hand, prophane and wicked men, even after their death—like "Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin after "him"—endanger others by their vicious examples, their corrupt principles, and pernicious doctrines—"their words still eating as a canker." As therefore a particular judgment rewards the good or punishes the evil which men have done in this life; so in the last general judgment there shall be a further reward or punishment for that which, after their death, they have occasioned to be done by others.

(4) Each man being considered as a single person undergoes a particular judgment, which he feels secretly passed upon him at the time of his death: but because the same man is likewise a part of the whole world, he must be brought to that universal judgment, wherein God shall judge the whole world openly in the sight of both men and Angels.

From the certainty of a judgment to come, let

us pass on to the time appointed for it. He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.

The distinction of days and nights will then be ended. A day in the Scriptures is usually mentioned rather for a set time than for a continued space of time exactly measured by hours and minutes. "It "is not for you," says our Saviour to His disciples, "to know the times or the seasons, which the Father "hath put in His own power." Our Saviour in another place says, "of that day and hour knoweth "no man; no not the Angels of Heaven, but my "Father only." Of the last day no certain knowlege can be had; only this way of understanding the case may be safe as well as certain, that the time before the law being past, and the time under the law being ended; the time under the Gospel in which we live is the last time—after which there shall be time no longer.

But tho we cannot tell <u>when</u> that day shall be—

we may and ought to know what manner of day it shall be—a day cheerful and amiable on the one side, but dreadful and terrible on the other; like the pillar of a cloud in the wilderness, shewing light to the Israelites, but fearful darkness to the Egyptians. To the righteous it will be "a day of redemption." They shall then "lift up their heads with joy, knowing "that their Redemption draweth nigh. A day of "restitution of all things;" when their corrupted bodies shall rise in incorruption and be restored to their souls, that they may be conformable to the glorious body of Christ, when they shall be admitted to the possession of that kingdom which they had forfeited through the fall of Adam. And lastly; it will be a day "of "refreshing and rejoicing," when, like dead flowers, "the dead in Christ" shall be refreshed with beauty and vigour; when all tears shall be wiped away from their faces; when "they shall be abundantly satisfied "with the fatness of God's house, and made to drink "of the river of His pleasures."

But on the other side—the day of judgment will be to the wicked "a day of wrath; a day of ven=
"geance; a great and terrible day—who can abide
"it? Then shall the sun be darkened, and the moon
"shall not give her light; the stars shall fall from
"heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."
If at the giving of the law "there were thunderings
"and lightenings, and the sound of the trumpet, so
"terrible that Moses said he exceedingly trembled and
"quaked"—what may we imagine, will be at the requiring an account for the performances of the law? Will not God be more terrible to the transgressors of His law, than to the first receivers of it? Miserable will be the condition of sinners, when they shall have their sins accusing, and their consciences stinging within them!

Should any persons prophanely object and say, the day is likely to be terrible when it shall come, but we are at a great distance from it—"all things
"continue still as they were at the beginning of the

"creation"—the same revolutions of the heavens—the same changes of times and seasons—one generation passeth and another succeedeth, and so may do, for any thing we know, for ages to come; St. Peter, who foretold this their objection, gives them in the same chapter their answer, "that they are willingly ignorant of this"—they will not take notice or remember how God, who made the heavens and the earth, sent forth a deluge to overflow the earth and all the inhabitants thereof, a few only excepted, while the heavens kept their usual courses, and the earth did not fail to bring forth her increase; men did eat and drink, married and were given in marriage, as little fearing such a general destruction, as the persons that make this objection do now dread a day of judgment. What God at that time did by water, St. Peter tells us, that He will one day do again by fire. And tho' He may seem long in coming, yet "He is not "slack as some men count slackness—for with Him "a thousand years are as one day." His delay does

not proceed from forgetfulness or change of purpose, but from His long-suffering and love to mankind. If the Apostles in their time thought that day to be near, it must now, after so many ages, be much nearer; the more time there is past, the less there is to come—and when time, and how soon, shall cease, is known to God only. But tho' the world should yet continue some ages longer, and the general assizes be put off, the appearance of any single person, nay of many or most of us, may be near at hand; no one can be sure he shall not soon be called privately to give an account of his past thoughts, words, and deeds. Let us then prepare ourselves this day whilst it is called to day, as if it were the last of our lives. Let us arraign, judge, and condemn ourselves—then we need not fear being acquitted in our own consciences. "And if our heart "condemn us not," after an impartial and severe examination, then have we confidence towards God—a modest and humble confidence even in that awful day

in which God shall judge the world in righteousness.

By the world we are to understand every intellectual creature, the quick and the dead—not only those that have died or shall die in all ages from the creation, but those likewise that shall be found alive at that day—"I saw the dead," says St. John in a vision of the last judgment, "both small and great, stand "before God; and the dead were judged according to "their works." And St. Paul assures us, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of "Christ, that every one may receive the things done in "his body according to that he hath done, whether it "be good or bad." And in another place—"every one "of us shall give account of himself to God." Every one, not all jointly and confusedly together in the gross, but every one by himself in particular must there give an account of his actions to Christ, and be judged equally and impartially.

Since then the whole world shall be judged good and bad, great and small, let no man think he can

escape that judgment, or be hid from appearing at that general assize. The Son of Sirach shews the folly of such thoughts—"say not thou I will hide "myself from the Lord; shall any remember me "from above? I shall not be remembered among so "many people; for what is my soul among such an "infinite number of creatures?" No! God has an all-seeing eye and a memory that cannot fail; and therefore it is laid down as a certain conclusion by the wise man [Eccles. 16. 13.] "that the sinner shall "not escape with his spoils, and the patience of the "godly shall not be frustrate."

Since all must come to judgment hereafter, let no man presume rashly to judge his brother, since both must stand at last before the supreme Judge. "Why "dost thou judge thy brother?" says the Apostle—"or "why dost thou set at nought thy brother? Let us not "therefore judge one another any more." Our own behaviour will be employment sufficient for the most penetrating eye, the most discerning judgment, and the

most censorious tongue. The man who attentively considers that he is a weak, and frail, and sinful mortal, will immediately see he has no leisure, and feel he has no inclination, curiously and censoriously to judge of his neighbor's life and conversation.

Since judgment is to pass impartially upon all, let every man be careful so to conduct himself, that he may find approbation with God when he comes to appear before that dreadful seat of judgment. St. Paul writing to the Corinthians says, "we labor that whether present or absent, we may be accepted by Him," and in the next verse he assigns the reason; "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Let us now consider, in the last place, the manner in which God will judge the world. He will judge it in righteousness.

And certainly if God be the judge, there is no question but His judgment will be righteous. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God cannot be ignorant nor deceived, that His judgment should

need to be reverſed for want of ſufficient information and knowlege; He will not judge from report, nor will He ſee with the eyes of another. "For there "is no creature that is not manifeſt in His ſight." It will then be impoſsible to hide that which is now kept ſecret. "God regardeth not perſons, nor taketh "reward. Neither the ſilver nor the gold of the "riched, ſhall be able to deliver them in the day of "the Lord's wrath."

The juſtice of His proceedings here is not indeed apparent to the eyes of men. The wicked flouriſh and ſeem to be happy, as if they were rewarded for their iniquity; and the innocent are in troubles and afflictions, and frequently overwhelmed with miſeries, as if they were puniſhed for their innocency. But in that day, which the Apoſtle calls "the day of the "revelation of the right judgment of God," His juſtice will be made ſo evident, that no gainſayer ſhall be able to deny or except againſt it. Then ſhall Lazarus ſit down with Abraham in the kingdom of

heaven, when he who applied his wealth directly contrary to the purpose for which it was given him, shall not find one drop of water to cool his tongue. And this is one strong and convincing argument of a righteous judgment to come, and a life after this, wherin God's servants shall be amply rewarded for the miseries they feel in this world—else God's justice and veracity would rightfully be called in question, should all the hope and expectation of the good man end with his miseries in this life.

Nay the very unrighteousness that is practised in the world, is a sure evidence and demonstration of a righteous judgment in the world to come. "I saw "under the sun the place of judgment, that wicked-"ness was there, and the place of righteousness that "iniquity was there; then I said in my heart, God "shall judge the righteous and the wicked." What an inexhaustible source of comfort is this to all that are "oppressed with wrong," and can obtain no help, no right here upon earth at the hands of men! "The-

"day is coming when God shall judge the world in "righteousness—" when he that doeth wrong shall re= "ceive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is "no respect of persons."

I have not, as you must have observed, intro= duced those awful descriptions of the last day with which the Scriptures abound. I have rather chose to appeal to your cool and sober judgment. Upon a subject so interesting I would not alarm your fears; I would rather convince your reason: For surely nothing can have so much weight with a rational creature, as the reflection that he is to be tried by a just and holy God: It remains only that we all offer up our most fervent prayers to God that He would dispose us, by the continual influences of His grace, to live under the expectation of that fearful day—that He would dispose us "to live a godly, righteous, and "sober life, looking for and hasting unto the coming "of the day of God, when those who have done good, "shall go into life everlasting, and those who have done

" evil," I tremble whilst I pronounce it, " into ever-
" lasting fire." God of His infinite mercy grant
that every one of us may be of the number of those
" whose sins are washed away by the blood of His
" Son Jesus Christ!"

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Theoph^s. J. St. John.